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A JOB CORPS CENTER READING PROGRAM.

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A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE KILMER JOB CORPS CENTER AND OF THE READING PROGRAM CONDUCTED AT THE CENTER IS PRESENTED. THE TOPICS DISCUSSED INCLUDE THE POPULATION OF THE JOB CORPS CAMP, THE TIME ALLOTED TO VARIOUS TRAINING ACTIVITIES, THE TEACHING STAFF, THE EQUIPMENT OF THE READING CLINIC, THE ACTIVITIES OBSERVED IN FOUR CLASSROOMS, A LIST OF UNITS FROM THE SCHOOL OF COMMERCIAL TECHNOLOGY WHERE PRINTERS WERE TRAINED, AND THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WHERE STUDENTS CAME TO STUDY FOR A HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY EXAMINATION. SOME OF THE PROBLEMS OF OPERATING A JOB CORPS CENTER, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATED TO READING INSTRUCTION, ARE EXAMINED. THE PROBLEMS MENTIONED INCLUDE THE CREATION OF THE BEST TEACHING-LEARNING SITUATION FOR THE ENROLLEES, THE ELIMINATION OF THE HIGH DROPOUT RATE, THE CONTROL OF THE CONSTANT CHANGES MADE IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS AND PERSONNEL, THE EXPENDITURE OF ALLOTTED MONEY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BUSINESS ORGANIZATION RUNNING THE CAMP AND THE UNIVERSITY CONSULTANTS. INFORMAL CONCLUSIONS ARE OFFERED. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED TO THE ANNUAL MEETING, NATIONAL READING CONFERENCE, "JUNIOR COLLEGE AND ADULT READING PROGRAMS--EXPANDING FIELDS" (16TH, ST. PETERSBURG, DECEMBER 1-3, 1966). (RH)

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A JOB CORPS CENTER READING PROGRAM*

by

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This paper will have two parts. First, we will have a brief description of the Center and the Reading Program currently being conducted. Next, we will discuss some of the problems in a Job Corps Center and particularly those related to reading instruction.

Kilmer Job Corps Center is located in an abandoned Army Camp formerly known as Camp Kilmer which is about 35 miles south of New York City. Most of the buildings in the Camp are temporary barracks constructed for World War II reluctant tenants. The Camp is operated by Federal Electric Corporation with varying degrees of consultant services being supplied by Rutgers University.

*[redacted] address to the Sixteenth Annual Meeting National Reading Conference, "Junior College and Adult Reading Programs -- Expanding Fields" December 1-3, 1966, St. Petersburg, Florida

The Camp was slated for a maximum capacity of 2500 corpsmen. At present it is operating with 1580 corpsmen. Its highest actual enrollment was around 2100 corpsmen last Spring. There are about 700 full-time employees, a few of which, the dorm counsellors, also live in camp.

The corpsmen are young men between the ages of 16 and 21 most of whom have not completed high school. Most come from either rural or urban economically depressed areas. Initially, the intake was about half white and half negro, but lately a majority of negro corpsmen have been enrolling. All of the boys at the camp are volunteers, though frequently they were encouraged to do so by a staff member of the U.S. Employment Service or one of their community social service workers.

There are two kinds of Job Corps Training Units. Both live in camps. The smaller conservation camps are located in forest or rural areas and theoretically have boys with lower basal academic skills who could not profit

from more technical training. The urban centers have boys with better academic skills, the definition being approximately 4th grade reading ability or better. But one of our later speakers, Dr. Porter, will describe how this selection is made. The Kilmer Center, for example, teaches such trades as truck driving, baking, printing, and refrigeration repair.

Dr. Kling, who follows on this program, will give a more detailed description of the corpsmen's reading abilities. What I will present now is a brief description of the place and manner of reading instruction in the program that currently exists. Mr. Zelnick will give a more detailed description of reading methods and materials used in the remedial area.

Reading in the Curriculum

The boys spend half a day in the academic classroom and half a day in the shops or direct vocational training. Some of the vocational training is most

realistic; for example, the truck driving school has rented various sizes of trucks from delivery vans to large over-the-road tractors and trailers.

Approximately half of a class of 64 students turn up in the morning and are received by a team of 3 academic teachers, one specializing in communications which includes reading and writing, one specializing in math and science, one specializing in social studies. Thus, if the boys are divided equally each teacher would have about 11 students, and if the time were divided equally, which is not always the case, he would see these 11 students for about 45 minutes. Thus, we see that reading instruction is sandwiched in with all the communication arts and approximately 1/6th of the students' training time is devoted to communications skills. If we assume that half of the communications is devoted to reading and half to writing, speaking, and literature, we can see that approximately 1/12th or 22 minutes a day are devoted to reading instruction.

Up until last summer there also existed a reading clinic which was staffed by 5 mostly competent teachers and a moderately generous assortment of equipment that included the usual remedial reading materials, programmed instructional materials, kits, tachistoscopes, tape recorders, and language masters. Remedial reading instruction in this clinic was usually done on a one to one basis though occasionally small groups with 3 or 4 corpsmen of similar abilities were formed. Rutgers University Reading Center had a full-time staff member, Mr. Zelnick, assigned to the Camp and he spent a majority of his time in the reading clinic. Students were referred to the clinic by teachers based on observations of need and test scores.

Unfortunately, there was no systematic use of mass testing scores in referring every student and we felt that the Camp Reading Clinic was reaching less than half of the students that needed remedial reading help. However, this problem was solved during the Summer of 1966 when the Reading Center was closed with the explanation

that there was a shortage of funds. What actually happened was that the contractor, Federal Electric Corporation, put in one renewal price to run the camp for the next 12 months' period and an additional amount for special operation such as the Reading Center. The Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington under Congressional fire to hold down Job Corps costs bought no extras. Whether or not remedial reading instruction should be part of the basic camp expenditure is a matter of emotional controversy, but the facts are that the remedial program was closed and is closed. At least one of the top administrators in the Camp feels that one solution to this problem is simply to exclude all boys who have below 4th grade reading ability. This closing of the Reading Center also caused some of the teachers most skilled in the area of reading to seek employment in the public schools.

Perhaps the best way to describe what actually is happening is a brief description of observations of

4 classrooms. Two of the classrooms were recommended by the administration as being good (Classrooms 1 and 4) -- two others were picked at random.

Classroom No. 1 had eleven students present. They were all working hard, most of them using the Mott programmed reading materials. The instructor was preparing a special drill on synonyms. He stated that among other methods used frequently were the Learning Through Seeing Tachistoscopic Films.

Classroom No. 2 the students were using the Scott-Foresman galaxy books. The teacher was at the blackboard explaining some arithmetic problems and explained that the math teacher was absent that day and he was taking both sections. There were about 12 students present. He stated that the materials that he used most frequently were the Scott-Foresman Basic Skill for High School Workbooks.

Classroom No. 3. There were 4 students present taking a test on capitalization. The teacher had written about 14 sentences on the board with no capitalization. The students were copying these, capitalizing them correctly. She stated that the reading material she used most frequently was the SRA Lab IIIa.

Classroom No. 4. The communications teacher was giving a lesson on picas which involved some mathematical computations. He evidently did not wish to be interrupted to discuss the reading program, but in evidence around the room were a number of printing publications and charts such as those naming the various shades of colored inks.

It is difficult to describe the curriculum in any one school, but Figure 1 gives a list of units from the School of Commercial Technology where printers are trained. As might be expected, this curriculum is probably

a little heavier than most in punctuation and word division skills. Most of the units under Basic English Age refer to booklets in the Lessons for Self-Instruction series published by California Test Bureau. (CD is an upper elementary designation and EF is a junior high designation.

FIGURE 1

CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR THE
SCHOOL OF COMMERCIAL TECHNOLOGY

UNIT I. SAFETY IN THE SHOP

1. Word List
2. General Safety Precautions
3. Fire Safety
4. Machinery
5. Chemicals
6. Eyes and Face
7. Personal Cleanliness
8. Questions
9. Projects
10. Achievement Test

UNIT II. INTRODUCTION TO OFFSET PRINTING

1. Brief History
2. Word List
3. Major Printing Processes
4. Basic Theory of Offset Printing
5. Offset Press
6. Projects-Demonstrations
7. Questions
8. Achievement Test

UNIT III. BASIC ENGLISH AIDS

1. Following Directions, C-D
2. Following Directions, E-F
3. Reading Interpretations, 1) C-D
4. Reading Interpretations, II) C-D
5. Reading Interpretations, II) E-F
6. Reference Library C-D
7. Capitalization C-D
8. Sentence Patterns C-D
9. Verbs, Number & Case C-D
10. Verbs, Number & Case E-F
11. Punctuation

UNIT IV. DIVIDING WORDS

1. Basic Principles
2. Rules
3. Prefixes and Suffixes
4. Double Consonant & Proper Nouns
5. The Hyphen
6. Achievement Test

UNIT V. PUNCTUATION FOR PRINTERS

1. Importance
2. Period and Question Mark
3. The Comma and the Exclamation Mark
4. Colon and Semicolon
5. Quotation Marks
6. Parentheses and Brackets
7. Ellipses
8. The Dash
9. Capitalization
10. Achievement Test

UNIT VI. TECHNICAL TERMS

1. Printers Language
2. Achievement Test

UNIT VII. ABBREVIATIONS

1. Common Abbreviations
2. Dates, Figures, Footnotes
3. Cities, States, Countries
4. Achievement Test

UNIT VIII. SPECIAL MARKS OF PUNCTUATION

1. Accent Marks
2. The Asterisk, Dagger and Double Dagger
3. Dieresis
4. Achievement Test

UNIT IX. THE POINT SYSTEM

1. Schematic Drawing-Printers Inch
2. Addition
3. Subtraction
4. Multiplication
5. Division
6. Achievement Test

This audience might also be interested in the GED program (General Educational Development Program) which are those students released from their regular academic classes who come to study for a high school equivalency examination. This program contains about 100

students and the GED teachers are quite proud of the fact that over 70% who are allowed to sit for these examinations pass it. The communications course of study is very heavily loaded with traditional grammar. In Figure 2, I have included two of the units to illustrate this point and also included the one unit devoted exclusively to reading. Eleven of the fourteen units are grammar, 1 unit reading, 1 vocabulary building, and 1 spelling.

Though the Job Corps opened with pronouncements by many including most of the administrators that there were very few suitable commercial materials available for the teaching of reading of this type of young man, it appears that there are indeed many materials. Mr. Zelnick will give lists of more reading materials than any group of teachers could possibly use.

Another early pronouncement was that since these boys had failed in school, the teaching-learning situation

should be radically new and unlike the public schools which directly or indirectly were blamed for their failure. It has been our observation that the Job Corps has become progressively more like the public schools. For example, they have reorganized into a "schools approach" with a chief administrator who, for all practical purposes, resembles a "principal." The teachers who were first enjoined chiefly to be creative and empathetic are now encouraged to hold regular lessons and in many instances even provide lesson plans or outlines of objectives that they wish to accomplish. Congress which at first lavished money on the Job Corps because it was a "War on Poverty", soon began to examine the cost of the "War" and have now come to the realization that it costs about twelve times as much to keep a boy in the Job Corps as it does in the Public Schools. It would be unquestionably disconcerting to an average taxpayer to walk down the halls of nearby Edison High School and look at the number of students working compared with the total attendance, and then walk

down the halls of the Job Corps camp and observe the number of students working compared with the total attendance. The public schools have an incomparably higher attendance rate and it is my opinion that the utilization of their time is much more effective.

Of course, there is always the possibility that by taking students out of their environment some new and magical change takes place. It is yet to be demonstrated, however, that these boys do not return to essentially the same environment from which they left. Unfortunately, there is a politcal controversy raging as to whether or not War on Poverty funds should be given to community action projects which keep the boys at home or to the Job Corps which removes them to distant living centers. It is, however, safe to say that if you took the average school superintendent or high school principal and told him that instead of $600 a year to spend on this type of student, he could now have $12,000 per year, I suspect that he would provide a very different type of school situation than is repeated to have "caused" the student to drop out of school.

Dropouts are usually caused by many factors of which the school environment is only one. Incidentally, the Job Corps also has a high dropout rate. There are no published figures but some observers believe it to be in excess of 50% during a six months training period. The U.S. High Schools have about a 13% dropout rate over 4 years. Job Corps rural whites have a higher dropout rate than urban negroes.

Another problem faced by this and other Job Corps centers is the constant change. One can hardly expect an organization which almost literally went into business yesterday to have long standing and stable traditions or organizational patterns, but constant major changes can hardly help any organization. This change-orientation stems from the very top. Directives and consultations from the Washington office seem to veer sharply sometimes at right angles from each other over a six months period. Since many of the administrators involved in the program have

skills only as administrators and not as educators, they are constantly tinkering with the administrative structure in some naive belief that by sorting their problems into different piles, they will somehow be solved. This constant reorganization, and in some instances, lack of organization, is one of the chief causes for high staff turnover. New faces on the staff then fan the already existing problem of more changing organization.

How to spend money is also a major problem. Camp Kilmer was given in excess of 12 million dollars to spend over an 18 month period. The greatest number of students they had at any one time was 2100 and the average daily attendance over this period was something under a thousand. Thus we saw such phenomena as a curriculum development division headed by an administrator inexperienced in curriculum development which contained three artist draftsmen for preparing novel audio-visual materials and posters, four writers and editors and several other secretaries and

junior administrators. We saw a fine arts department which had several full-time artists in residence and several part-time art instructors; this for a population whose average IQ was 80. The physical education program contained ex major league baseball stars and the Public Relations Department staffed by most competent professionals, including a full-time photographer. These are some of the little luxuries which the average high school cannot afford.

Finally, we come to the problem of University relationships, with a business organization running an educational institution. This strange amalgan was partially brought on by a philosophy stemming from some Washington officials that the public schools had failed and were otherwise inadequate, that private enterprise, more specifically defense contractors, especially those with demonstrated ability in handling complex technological products, could somehow show the nation and the schools how these boys really should be educated.

The first impressive fact was that private enterprise could throw raw manpower into writing a proposal. This organization geared to writing government proposals in a course of three weeks had several hundred page documents listing the total number of spoons needed and a pat curriculum organization.

Initially, the contractor gave the University consultants a relatively free hand in setting up the curriculum and ordering materials. But just as soon as they developed their own in-house staff, which was frequently composed of educators hired by newspaper advertisements, they began to resist University consultants' suggestions.

An early major battle was to keep them from sending back commercially ordered reading material, and it was only by dint of the sound argument that they should keep them until they had developed their own materials, because boys were arriving in several weeks, that we

managed to keep everything from being sent back. Needless to say, in the course of the next two years they did not develop very many curriculum materials, and today rely very heavily on commercially prepared materials.

We cannot say that the University was a "white angel" during all of the development of the Job Corps relationships. Some of the consultants were worse than useless and succeeded in making roundhouse criticisms having nothing to do with their specialities. Perhaps this report falls somewhat into that category. There was at least one serious breach of ethics when a report intended for the management was somehow "leaked" to the New York Times.

At the present time, the University is considering severing all relationships with the Job Corps, and from the standpoint of many Job Corps officials this will not be an unmixed blessing.

From the standpoint of reading, I feel we have learned several things.

1. A lot of money will not rapidly cure reading problems.

2. It is very hard to develop reading curriculum materials.

3. There are a lot of good commercially available materials.

4. The public schools aren't so dumb.

5. The best teachers were experienced teachers with interest in this segment of the population.

6. A limited amount of materials can be especially developed for this type of child.

7. Even with selection tests which proport to screen out remedial readers, a reading clinic was still necessary.